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SUBJECT: URI PARTY REP. CHUN JUNG-BAE ON NORTH KOREA AND
POSSIBLE CHANGES IN THE URI PARTY

Classified By: Amb. Alexander Vershbow. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In a November 6 meeting with the Ambassador, Uri Representative Chun Jung-bae made his case why the Uri Party has a chance to maintain the Blue House in next year's presidential election and why he might be the person to lead the Uri Party charge. Chun, the former Justice Minister who stepped down in July to take a more active role in the Uri Party, said engagement with the North should be maintained in order to preserve peace on the Peninsula. He said that if the Uri Party did not change there would be no chance to win next year; therefore the main goal now for the party was to focus on its strength, looking out for the common person, while working on its weakness, its handling of the economy. He said the Roh administration had to put forward some good policies to revitalize the economy or the road ahead would be difficult for the party and the country. END SUMMARY.

CHANGES IN THE URI PARTY: PATH TO VICTORY?

12. (C) Former Justice Minister and a prominent Uri legislator Chun Jung-bae invited the Ambassador to lunch on November 6 and said that the Uri Party should form a coalition to include supporters of former PM Goh Kun as well as members of the Democratic Party (DP). He said the Uri Party was founded on the principles of reform, but had split with the DP over how the party needed to change. The challenge now was to narrow that gap so that the two parties could rejoin and present a united front to battle the opposition Grand National Party (GNP). The key for any hope of an Uri coalition victory would be to have a broad base of support, built on policy, rather than ideology. Chun said that although Goh announced he would form a new party on November 1, he might be open to the formation of a coalition.

13. (C) Chun said the Uri Party had lost the trust of the people. That stemmed from poor policy direction and implementation. Examples included the divisive education reform, the lack of jobs, and the failed real estate policy reforms of the Roh administration. In its final year, the Roh administration needed to put forward new policies boldly to counter the opposition GNP and regain public trust. The party needed to focus on the center and not necessarily become more progressive. He admitted some wanted to move further left and make social welfare the base of the party but he, Chairman Kim Geun-tae and others in the party did not believe this was the right course.

¶4. (C) Chun admitted that the big problem facing the Uri Party was it had no strong presidential candidate with wide popular support. However, polls one year ahead of the election were historically inaccurate. The party had to work to regain popular support, but Chun remained confident that Uri could field a viable candidate. Chun added that the primary system was an important process to choose that candidate.

NORTH KOREA

¶5. (C) The Ambassador said that Under Secretaries Burns and Joseph would arrive in Seoul on November 6 and have a series of meetings to prepare for the Six Party Talks and UNSCR 1718. It was important for the U.S. and ROK to agree on a strategy on what to do at the Six Party Talks and how to implement UNSCR 1718. There needed to be a two-track approach with pressure from the UN as well as flexibility from the parties participating in the Six Party Talks. In the wake of its nuclear test, it was necessary for North Korea to take early concrete steps toward dismantling its nuclear programs. At the same time, the USG was ready to form a working group within the Six Party Talks framework to discuss the Banco Delta Asia case.

¶6. (C) Chun said that North Korea was hard to trust and it was difficult to expect much from the leaders of the regime. The fact that the DPRK had threatened the ROK for decades was not right, but peace was paramount, which was why the ROK and others had to engage the North. Chun said a U.S. expert told him that the 1994 Geneva Agreement was a success for the U.S. because it put North Korea in the U.S. sphere of control. Of

course, the North chose not to honor the 1994 agreement, but still the success of the agreement should not be ignored. Perhaps North Korea could develop along the Vietnam model if we all worked together to engage North Korea and encourage reforms. Chun suggested that if engagement did not work, sanctions would be necessary.

¶7. (C) The Ambassador said that it was not possible to lift UNSCR 1718 until the DPRK denuclearized. Return to the Six Party Talks was only a first step. President Bush wanted to solve the North Korean nuclear problem diplomatically. Some see engagement as an area where the U.S. and ROK have differences, although these were not differences in basic objectives. The current debate in the ROK on how to engage the North could narrow any gap and lead to real progress through a unified approach toward North Korea.

¶8. (C) Chun allowed that any policy, even one such as the engagement policy, needed to change with the prevailing situation. That said, if Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC) or Mt. Kumgang tourism project were closed, it would take a lot of effort to reopen them. The Ambassador assured Chun that the USG had not suggested the ROK abandon all inter-Korean economic projects and thought that the KIC had some transformational value. Chun agreed that the funds that were sent to North Korea should be more carefully tracked to ensure that none of the funds went to even indirectly support the DPRK's WMD programs.

¶9. (C) The Ambassador said Uri Party Chairman Kim Geun-tae's recent trip to KIC sent the wrong signal to North Korea and to Washington. Chun said he accompanied Kim and that the trip's intention was one of peace and was not meant to suggest that Korea or the Uri Party supported the North's October 9 nuclear test. The Ambassador said the timing of the trip was particularly ill advised and the dance by Kim, coupled with the Korean press' interpretation of the trip, contributed to many in Washington's disappointment with Kim's visit to KIC. The Ambassador said it was important the U.S. and the ROK sent a unified message to North Korea.

VISA WAIVER

¶10. (C) Chun thanked the Ambassador for his support when Chun was Justice Minister, particularly on the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). The Ambassador said that while all the work had not been completed for Korea to qualify for the VWP, the two countries had made much progress on law enforcement cooperation. Visa fraud remains an issue and there were still too many false documents submitted in visa applications. Continued cooperation was needed to educate people on the consequences of submitting false documents and also better information sharing among our law enforcement agencies was needed for us to catch facilitators of fraud. The main message was we wanted to convey to Koreans was that Korea should help the U.S. help Korea to enter the VWP.

COMMENT

¶11. (C) These are difficult times for Chun Jung-bae, who, along with Kim Geun-tae and former Unification Minister Chung Dong-young was instrumental in forming the Uri Party. A close associate of President Roh, Chun must now find the magic formula that will preserve the progressive coalition while distancing himself from the unpopular president. Even if he does not become a presidential candidate, Chun will remain a key power broker in the progressive camp.

VERSHBOW